Predictability Limitations of Long-Range Sound Propagation

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LONG-TERM GOAL

Our long-term scientific goal is to understand the basic physics of low-frequency long-range sound propagation in the ocean, and the effects of environmental variability on signal stability and coherence. We seek to understand the fundamental limits to signal processing imposed by ocean variability to enable advanced signal processing techniques, including matched field processing and other adaptive array processing methods.

OBJECTIVES

The principal objective of our ongoing effort is to develop a theory of acoustic fluctuations in long-range propagation that correctly accounts for measurements. This objective is motivated by the failure (as reported by Colosi *et al*, 1999) of traditional approaches (see, e.g., Flatté *et al*., 1979) to the study of wave propagation in random media (WPRM) to predict measured time spreads and intensity statistics in recent long-range underwater acoustic experiments. Work to date strongly suggests that acoustic fluctuations are to a surprisingly large degree controlled by a property (the ray-based stability parameter α or the asymptotically equivalent mode-based waveguide invariant β) of the background sound speed profile, rather than details of the sound speed perturbation. As a result, much of the recent theoretical work has been motivated by a desire to understand what wavefield properties are controlled by α or β. Over the past two years a significant part of this effort has been devoted to the analysis of measurements made during the LOAPEX experiment.

APPROACH

The group in Miami (M Brown, F J Beron-Vera, I Udovydchenkov and I Rypina; note that IU and IR are now at WHOI) has employed a combination of ray- and mode-based theory, combined with PE simulations, to study and quantify acoustic fluctuations. Much, but not all, of the mode-based theory is based on an asymptotic analysis, as this provides a direct link to the ray-based analysis. Similarly, much, but not all, of the ray-based analysis makes use of action-angle variables, as this provides a direct link to the mode-based analysis. Another crucial connection between the ray- and mode-based analyses derives from the asymptotic equivalence of the ray stability parameter α and the modal waveguide invariant β. Throughout the past year we have continued to extend relevant theoretical

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14. ABSTRACT
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developments, but we have prioritized work involving the application of theoretical results to the analysis of measurements made as part of the recent LOAPEX propagation experiment. Specific topics/questions, which have been investigated by the PI during the past two years, are listed in the following section.

WORK COMPLETED

The work listed below is in various stages of completion. The work listed in items 1 and 2 has been published and, in this sense, is complete. The work described in item 3 has been submitted for publication. The work described in item 4 represents a new – and important, we believe – theoretical direction. This is a fairly recent, and ongoing, initiative that is being pursued with I. Rypina and I. Udovydchenkov at WHOI. The ongoing work described in item 5 is being done in close collaboration with I. Udovydchenkov at WHOI.

1. *Effective ray widths in inhomogeneous media*

Under typical deep-ocean propagation conditions at ranges of approximately 100 km or more there are two contributions to the effective width of a ray. The first is the diffractive contribution, the Fresnel zone width. The second is a scattering-induced, or micromultipathing, contribution. In Rypina and Brown (2007) approximate analytical expressions for both contributions are derived in an environment consisting of a stratified background on which a small-scale perturbation, due for example to internal waves, is superimposed; both contributions are shown to be controlled by α. In the same paper it is shown that theoretical predictions agree well with travel time sensitivity kernel (TSK) (Skarsoulis and Cornuelle, 2004) calculations.

2. Modal group time spreads

Modal group time spreads in an environment consisting of a stratified background on which a small-scale perturbation, due for example to internal waves, is superimposed have recently been investigated (Udovydchenkov and Brown, 2008). In this paper it is shown that that there are three contributions to the time spread - the reciprocal bandwidth, a deterministic dispersive contribution and a scattering-induced contribution - and that the dispersive and scattering contributions are controlled by β. This work provides a foundation for much of the LOAPEX experiment data analysis effort described below (see item 5).

3. Beam dynamics

The dynamics of directionally narrow acoustic beams have recently investigated by Beron-Vera and Brown (2008). Both the spatial and temporal spreading narrow beams have been shown to be controlled by α (or its mode equivalent β). This conclusion is supported by both ray- and mode-based analyses.

4. Resonant scattering and resonance widths

A correct, but not widely utilized, description of the mechanism underlying sound scattering in a waveguide (e.g., mode coupling) is resonant scattering. Resonances are excited between the background rays, which are periodic in range, and periodic structures in the sound speed perturbation.

For a narrowband (in horizontal wavenumber) perturbation only a small number of resonances are excited, while for a broadband perturbation many resonances are excited. As a first step towards better understanding and quantifying this process, a general expression for resonance widths has been derived (Rypina et al., 2007). Resonant scattering will be further explored in future work. This work is being done in collaboration with I. Rypina and I. Udovydchenkov at WHOI.

5. LOAPEX analysis

Analysis of LOAPEX measurements is now well underway, both at RSMAS and elsewhere, especially WHOI and APL/UW. (The work described here is being done in close collaboration with I. Udovydchenkov, who is now at WHOI.) The RSMAS/WHOI effort has so far been closely linked to the modal group time spread work described in item 2, above. This work, which involves many collaborators at APL/UW and SIO, is currently being written up. Agreement between measurements (after suitable mode processing) and theoretical predictions is quite good. Two manuscripts are currently in preparation. The first focuses on near-axial energy, corresponding to small mode numbers. The second focus on high mode numbers and associated signal processing issues.

RESULTS

Although our goal of developing a theory of acoustic fluctuations in long-range propagation is not yet complete, significant progress has been made. The forward scattering physics are much better understood than was the case a few years ago. An important result of the PI's work over the past few years is conceptual: the forward scattering of sound — by internal-wave-induced perturbations, for example — is largely controlled the background sound speed structure. Thus, sound scattering in environments with identical internal-wave-induced sound speed perturbations but different background speed structures may be very different.

IMPACT/APPLICATION

Our work is contributing to an improved understanding of the basic physics of low-frequency long-range sound propagation in the ocean, and the associated loss of signal stability and coherence imposed by environmental variability. This knowledge contributes to an understanding of the limitations of advanced signal processing techniques, such as matched field processing.

TRANSITIONS

Our results are being used to interpret (reinterpret, in some cases) data collected in long-range propagation experiments, e.g. SLICE89, AET, SPICE04 and LOAPEX. We are unaware of transitions to system applications.

RELATED PROJECTS

The PI and collaborators listed above actively collaborate with the NPAL (North Pacific Acoustic Laboratory) groups at SIO (P. Worcester, W. Munk, B. Cornuelle, M. Dzieciuch), APL/UW (J. Mercer, B. Dushaw, R. Andrew, F. Henyey and M. Wolfson) , UHawaii (B. Howe) and NPS (J. Colosi).

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